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MEMORANDUM

EYES ONLY

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

OUTSIDE SYSTEM INFORMATION

178-10004-10148

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14 October 1975

MEMORANDUM FOR: GENERAL SCOWCROFT

FROM: ROB ROY RATLIFF

SUBJECT: Justice Department Request for Mail Information

Jeanne Davis transmitted to me a request from the Department of Justice to survey 40 Committee and predecessor group files to determine any information of a list of subjects focused on operations involving mail. She asked that I transmit my findings directly to you.

I assume that Justice is interested in illegal use of the mails. As I understand CIA's admitted activity in this field, it was an intelligence collection operation and therefore would not be subject to review by the 40 Committee or its predecessors. We find no record that mail intercept operations were discussed by the 40 Committee or predecessors; however, there are references to mail operations in Committee records.

Jeanne Davis said Justice wanted material on "any use of mail techniques." These are representative items:

TAB A--Reports which indicate general mailings of propaganda and related material. There is nothing sinister in this--you put a book or pamphlet in an envelope, address it, put on postage and drop it in the mail.

TAB B--Letters were test mailed inside a denied area to see if they come out, or individuals mailed spontaneous letters to CIA-supported enterprises. Again, there is nothing unusual about this--regular use of the mail system.

TAB C--Special covert operations which make use of the mails, including:

C-1--A forged letter mailed in Prague to a Czech leader.

C-2--Mailing of black letters, primarily from third countries. However (see page 5 of 9 May 1972 item), some of these letters may have been inserted into the mail system ostensibly as having originated in the denied area.

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C-3--Some covert operations using the mail may have been designed to represent that the item was originally mailed in a denied area. In other words, you want the recipient to believe that his letter came from the Chinese Communists so you make it appear as if it had been mailed from China. Note that the last item in this group (17 and 10 January 1972) refers to "letter-insert mechanisms." I can find no elaboration of what this means, but it might represent intercept of the mail, surreptitious opening of a letter and the insert of some additional material.

C-4--National Intelligence Estimates and other reports of intelligence may refer to information, some part of which was gleaned from mail intercepts. On the basis of protecting sources and methods these would not normally be identified in a document. However if the question were asked at a meeting, the source might be orally identified as a mail intercept (or SIGINT or whatever).

C-5--This category represents probable entry into the international mail system to support a covert operation. The first item shows DOD sending letters ostensibly from groups in North Vietnam to other countries. The second shows CIA fabricating and mailing 700 letters "ostensibly from Peking." The third shows CIA fabricating Democratic Republic of Vietnam greeting cards and mailing them.

In each of the C-5 cases, operational information was probably gleaned from a mail intercept operation which would enable one to fabricate the paper, envelopes, writing and addressing styles, even counterfeit postage stamps and cachets, all with the aim of giving the appearance that the letter originated from a denied area. The material might then be inserted into the international mail system (e.g., you know that mail from Communist China transits Panama for onward distribution to Latin America; through liaison or independent contacts you insert your bundles in the sack from Peking and then it is given routine onward distribution through the regular mail system).

C-6--Here are two cases where the Committee was informed that mail intercepts were the source of information used in support of covert operations.

With regard to MONGOOSE files--which Mrs. Davis said Justice also wanted us to check--I find only the references at TAB D which suggest the possibility that mail intercept operations were a part of the response to intense pressures for more "hard" information on what was going on in Cuba.

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Mrs. Davis also said that Justice made reference to Walt Rostow's recollection of a general survey of all "intelligence programs country by country" made by the 303 Committee. I assume he means the general beginning-of-a-new-President's-term roundup (similar to the ones given Mr. Nixon and Mr. Ford). We find references to covert action reviews, but these appear to have been oral and we find nothing in writing, and no references to mail operations.

In summary, we have made a review of our files, with special reference to the general index of minutes and the country files deemed most likely to include references to "any use of mail techniques." Representative findings are cited above. We find no record of "illegal" mail operations being a subject of discussion or consideration within the 40 Committee and predecessor organizations (December 1958 to the present). However, there is evidence that the Committee was informed that mail intercept operations were conducted (TAB C-6).

Please advise if any additional material or presentation is desired.

Attachments
TABs A-D

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